

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
LAB-04 NSAE-00 PA-01 AID-05 /040 W
-----057976 261907Z /43 42
R 261245Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6129
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
INFO AMEMBASSY LOME

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 5226

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, NI, US
SUBJECT: AALC INTEREST IN NIGERIAN PROJECT

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1. SUMMARY: REPRESENTATIVES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN LABOR CENTER (AALC) CALLED ON EMBOFF APRIL 01 TO INFORM USG OF PROPOSED AALC PROJECT IN NIGERIA. LOME-BASED REGIONAL DIRECTOR PLANS TO RETURN TO LAGOS IN EARLY MAY TT CONTACT NIGERIAN LABOR CONGRESS. ALTHOUGH EFFORT INITIATED BY AALC, MINISTRY OF LABOR APPARENTLY HAS AT LEAST SOME INTEREST IN PROJECT. REQUEST GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT ON EMBASSY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH AALC IF PROJECT MATERIALIZES. END SUMMARY.

2. H. PETER LOEBARTH, LOME-BASED REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA, AFRICAN-AMERICAN LABOR CENTER (AALC) AND MR. BENJAMIN A. BENTUM CALLED ON EMBOFF APRIL 21 TO DISCUSS PROPOSED AALC PROJECT IN NIGERIA. BENTUM, WHO IS FORMER GHANIAN TRADE UNION OFFICEAL, HAS MADE THREE TRIPS TO NIGERIA THIS YEAR EXPLORING THROUGH
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PERSONAL CONTACTS IN THE MINISTRY THE POSSIBILITY OF AALC REESTABLISHING ITS PRESENCE HERE. THROUGH HIS EFFORTS THE MINISTRY INVITED PAT O'FARRELL OF AALC TO COME, BUT BECAUSE HE WAS UNAVAILABLE MR. LOEBARTH CALLED TO DISCUSS PROPOSAL. LOEBARTH PLANS TO RETURN THE FIRST WEEK IN MAY TO MAKE AN APPROACH DIRECTLY TO THE NIGERIA LABOR

CONGRESS (NLC).

3. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE AALC PROJECT WAS PROPOSED BY MINISTRY OR AALC BUT FOLLOWING IS OUTLINE OF PROPOSAL:

- A. DONATE A TRADE UNION LIBRARY.
- B. INVITE NIGERIAN TRADE UNION LEADERS TO PARTICIPATE IN HARVARD PROGRAM UNDER AALC AUSPICES.
- C. POSSIBLY PROVIDE AN AALC REPRESENTATIVE TO ASSIST IN ESTABLISHMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND TRADE UNION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

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4. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSION WITH LOEBARTH AND BENTUM IT WAS CLEAR THAT BENTUM HAD INITATED CONTACTS AT REQUEST OF AALC. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE HAD "UNOFFICIAL" CONTACT WITH COMMISSIONER OF LABOR, PERMANENT SECRETARY, AND G.C. OKOGWU, DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (NUMBER THREE IN MINISTRY). HIGHER RANKING LABOR OFFICIALS DID NOT WISH TO HAVE OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH AALC AND OKOGWU RECEIVED LOEBARTH WHEN HE VISITED.

5. BENTUM ENVISIONED AALC ASSISTANCE TO NLC AS A BALANCE TO CURRENT LEFTIST TREND IN UNION LEADER-
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SHIP. HE WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS HIS VIEW OR VIEW MINISTRY OFFICIALS. HE STATED THAT MINISTRY WANTED AALC TO CONTACT NLC DIRECTLY, BUT PROMISED TO PROVIDE INTRODUCTION TO SUNMONU, NLC PRESIDENT.

6. EMBOFF CALLED ON OKOGWU APRIL 25 WHO SAID AALC PROPOSAL WAS INITIATED BY AALC, NOT MINISTRY. HE ALSO STRESSED THAT AALC EFFORT MUST BE DIRECTED AT NLC AND CONTACTS SHOULD NOT COME THROUGH MINISTRY. HE ALSO DENIED ANY ROLE IN FUTURE AALC CONTACTS WITH NLC SAYING THAT MINISTRY WOULD SIMPLY FORWARD LETTER TO NLC WHEN RECEIVED. OKOGWU, WHO IS ADMIRER OF AMERICAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND ITS RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT, THOUGHT THAT AALC CONTACT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR UNION, BUT ADMITTED THAT ANY SUCH CONTACT WOULD REQUIRE ACCEPTANCE OF SIMILAR OFFERS FROM UNIONS IN SOVIET BLOC COUNTRIES. OKOGWU ALSO THOUGHT THAT NLC WOULD NOT DECLINE AALC OFFER BECAUSE PRO-WESTERN MEMBERSHIP IN NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AS WELL AS DESIRE FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WOULD BE PREDOMINATE.

7. CONTACTS WITH AALC WOULD PROVIDE FIRST CONCRETE FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT OF NEWLY ORGANIZED NIGERIAN LABOR MOVEMENT. AT SAME TIME THEY WILL PROVIDE OPENING FOR ACCEPTANCE OF SIMILAR SOVIET BLOC ASSISTANCE. WARINESS OF MINISTRY OF LABOR OFFICIALS OVER IDENTIFICATION WITH AALC APPROACH DEMONSTRATES THEIR CONCERN ABOUT BEING TOO CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT.

8. FOR DEPARTMENT. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY GUIDANCE DEPARMTFENT CAN PROVIDE ON EMBASSY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH AALC PROJECTS AND ADVISABILITY OF AALC INITIATING PROJECT AT THIS DELICATE TIME IN DEVWOPMENT OF LABOR MOVEMENT.
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9. FOR DEPARTMENT AND ACCRA. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION ADDRESSEES CAN PROVIDE ON BENJAMIN A. BENTUM, WHO STATES HE IS FORMER MINISTER IN NKRUMAH GOVERNMENT AND FORMER HEAD OF TRADE UNION CONGRESS OF GHANA.
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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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